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# TWENTIETH PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1071 (1996) of 30 August 1996, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 30 November 1996. It provides an update on developments in Liberia since my previous report, dated 17 October 1996 (S/1996/858 and Add.1), and contains recommendations on the future role of UNOMIL.

## II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

2. It will be recalled that the revised timetable for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement provided for periodic assessments by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNOMIL, representatives of the donor community and the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG). The first assessment meeting took place at Monrovia on 16 and 17 October 1996 under the chairmanship of Chief Tom Ikimi, Special Envoy of the Chairman of ECOWAS and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria.

### Meeting of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine

3. The findings and recommendations of the assessment team were considered by the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, which met at Monrovia on 8 and 9 November 1996. Member States of the Committee, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal, as well as Liberia, Mali, the Niger and Sierra Leone, attended the meeting. While Togo is a member State of the Committee of Nine, it did not send a representative to the meeting. My Special Representative, Mr. Anthony Nyakyi, the Eminent Person of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for Liberia, the Reverend Canaan Banana, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Edouard Benjamin, the Special Envoy of the United States of America for Liberia, Ambassador Howard Jeter, and senior officials of the Governments of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the new ECOWAS Special Representative for Liberia, Ambassador Balarabe Tafawa Balewa (Nigeria), were also present.

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4. The Committee considered that the situation in Liberia had improved markedly since the tragic events of April and May 1996. It noted, however, that the restoration of the peace process continued to be hindered by violations of the ceasefire and other serious incidents, including the detention of members of the Ceasefire Violations and Disarmament Committees at Zwedru on 17 September, the takeover of Greenville by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in September, and the massacre of 21 innocent civilians at Sinje on 28 September. The Committee also condemned the apparent attempt, on 31 October, to assassinate Councilman Charles Taylor, the leader of the NPFL. This incident, which took place in the Executive Mansion, is currently under investigation by a team composed of the Ministry of Justice, UNOMIL and the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The Committee decided to recommend for the consideration of the Chairman of ECOWAS the imposition of appropriate measures against the parties responsible for these incidents.

5. The Committee of Nine also adopted a code of conduct for the Council of State, with a view to ensuring that the actions and behaviour of its members conform to the letter and spirit of the Abuja Agreement. The code of conduct, which was accepted by all members of the Council, includes punitive measures to be taken by the Chairman of ECOWAS should its terms be violated.

6. The Committee noted with concern the continuing divisions within the Council of State. While it used the opportunity of its presence in Monrovia to try to facilitate the convening of a meeting of the Council, which has not met since the shooting incident on 31 October, it was unable to do so, given the difficulties of finding a venue considered neutral and safe by all members of the Council.

Preparations for elections

7. The Committee of Nine noted that strict adherence to the Abuja Agreement, especially with regard to disarmament, would be necessary in order to establish the conditions necessary for the holding of elections. In this connection, it established a subcommittee, which, under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, and in consultation with the United Nations and the LNTG, would review the question of elections and develop the modalities of the electoral process.

8. For its part, the Council of State has established a committee in order to seek the views of Liberian civilian and faction leaders, as well as of the Government's external partners, on the major issues relating to the holding of free and fair elections in Liberia. The committee is currently focusing its work on a review of Liberian electoral laws and constitutional provisions; the establishment of an independent and impartial administrative mechanism for the management of the electoral process; the role of the international community in the holding of elections; and the technical, logistic and financial assistance necessary to support the electoral process.

9. In this connection, I have received a request from the LNTG to send a technical survey team to Liberia to study these issues. It is my intention to send the team to Liberia in the coming weeks. It will consult with the LNTG, ECOWAS and other interested parties with a view to preparing recommendations on

the conduct of the electoral process and on the role the United Nations could play in this regard. In the meantime, an electoral officer has been assigned to UNOMIL to assist my Special Representative in carrying out this aspect of UNOMIL's mandate.

10. On 4 November, Mr. Lansana Kouyaté, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, met General Sani Abacha, the Head of State of Nigeria and Chairman of ECOWAS, to discuss, inter alia, how the United Nations and ECOWAS could further their cooperative efforts in support of the peace process in Liberia. The importance of continued close consultation between the two organizations on all matters relating to the Liberian peace process was recognized and reaffirmed.

## III. MILITARY ASPECTS

### Status of the ceasefire and disengagement of forces

11. The ceasefire continues to hold in Monrovia and most other parts of Liberia. On 27 October, Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson, the leaders of the two wings of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), agreed to cease hostilities in the west and to create a buffer zone between their forces there. They also agreed to establish a joint committee of their ground commanders in order to ensure the cessation of hostilities and oversee the disengagement of their forces. ECOMOG and UNOMIL have increased their patrols in the area and have observed that, while the situation in the west remains fragile, the two factions have begun to implement their agreements.

12. Most areas of the south-east remained relatively calm during the reporting period. The Ceasefire Violations Committee (CFVC) has completed its investigation into an allegation by the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) that the NPFL had taken over the city of Greenville (see map attached). The CFVC concluded that the NPFL had overrun the city some time during the month of September 1996, in violation of the Abuja Agreement. As noted earlier, its report was considered by the ECOWAS Committee of Nine during its meeting at Monrovia on 8 November, which decided to forward the report to the Chairman of ECOWAS for review and appropriate action.

13. The LPC has also alleged that the NPFL is moving its forces north towards Zwedru in a plan to attack the area. The NPFL has denied these allegations. Attempts by the CVFC to investigate the matter have so far been unsuccessful because of the lack of cooperation from the LPC regarding security arrangements for a visit to the area. In the meantime my Special Representative has called upon Charles Taylor to desist from any intention he may have to attack Zwedru and/or its environs.

### Deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL

14. The force strength of ECOMOG remains at 7,500 all ranks and its priority continues to be to ensure security in Monrovia. Consequently, the majority of ECOMOG troops are deployed in Monrovia and its environs, including Kakata and the Po River. ECOMOG is also deployed in Buchanan. During the reporting

period, a battalion of ECOMOG troops was redeployed to Greenville in order to facilitate the cessation of hostilities there. ECOMOG is also taking steps to deploy at Harper, the only port where ECOMOG is not currently deployed.

15. As at 15 November, the military strength of UNOMIL stood at 23 observers (see annex). UNOMIL and ECOMOG have continued to prepare for disarmament and to undertake joint patrols in the west, in Grand Cape Mount and Bomi counties, and in the north in Bong and Nimba counties, in order to monitor the ceasefire and the other military aspects of the Abuja Agreement.

16. It is expected that an additional 11 military observers will be deployed to Liberia in the coming weeks, bringing the strength of UNOMIL's military component to 34 observers. These observers will be deployed in Monrovia and at other sites in the interior of the country, in conjunction with the deployment of ECOMOG and the commencement of disarmament. The deployment of any additional military observers to Liberia will depend on progress in the peace process, particularly with regard to disarmament and demobilization.

Disarmament

17. In accordance with the revised timetable for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, disarmament and demobilization are scheduled to commence on 22 November 1996. The concept for implementation of this process was presented in my 17 October report. Despite the failure of the factions to implement fully the ceasefire and disengagement of forces by 31 August, the ECOWAS Committee of Nine has called on ECOMOG to take the steps necessary to prepare for the commencement of disarmament on 22 November, on the basis of the manpower and logistics currently available on the ground. To this end, the ECOMOG Force Commander has indicated that he will start deploying ECOMOG troops on 20 November to the following disarmament sites: Voinjama, Bo Waterside, Camp Naama, SOS Village, Zwedru and Tubmanburg. Disarmament will also take place in Monrovia, at Camp Schiefflin, and in Greenville. UNOMIL military observers will be co-deployed with ECOMOG at the disarmament sites. The commencement of this exercise, and indeed its successful conclusion, will, of course, depend on the willingness of the faction leaders to bring forth their fighters to be disarmed.

18. The current state of planning for the demobilization of the fighters after they have been disarmed is described below, in paragraphs 26 to 28.

Meeting of the ECOWAS Chiefs of Staff

19. The fourteenth meeting of the ECOWAS Chiefs of Staff was held at Monrovia on 5 and 6 November 1996. The Chiefs of Staff of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali and the Niger reiterated the pledges made by their Governments to contribute additional troops to ECOMOG, provided the necessary logistic resources were forthcoming. These pledges amount to an additional 2,250 troops. The ECOWAS secretariat has requested all potential ECOMOG troop-contributing countries to provide it with details of the logistic requirements necessary for the deployment of their contingents, with a view to presenting these requirements to donor countries.

## IV. HUMAN RIGHTS

20. The conflict in Liberia has been characterized by a tendency on the part of all factions to commit human rights violations against innocent civilians. The ECOWAS Committee of Nine deplored this tendency during its meeting on 8 and 9 November and called on the factions to desist from such practices. The ability of UNOMIL and local human rights groups to address reported violations of human rights has been impeded, however, by the looting that followed the outbreak of fighting in Monrovia on 6 April. Local human rights groups are in the process of rebuilding their capacity in this field and UNOMIL has continued to pursue its human rights mandate in both investigating and reporting on violations of human rights, and assisting local human rights groups in their work. In this connection, UNOMIL, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, ECOMOG and local human rights groups, is continuing its investigation into the 28 September massacre of 21 innocent civilians at Sinje, and is following up on other allegations of human rights violations, to the extent possible within its limited staffing and resources.

21. As noted in my previous report, I have assigned a human rights officer to assist my Special Representative in carrying out this aspect of UNOMIL's mandate and I am taking steps to appoint two additional human rights officers for UNOMIL. As UNOMIL strengthens its human rights activities, it will continue, in accordance with its mandate, to assist local human rights groups in raising voluntary contributions for training and logistic support. I call on the international community to consider ways in which it can assist in this regard and provide technical and logistical assistance, either through the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia or on a bilateral basis.

## V. HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS

### Relief and resettlement

22. During the reporting period, the humanitarian community continued to respond to the humanitarian needs of civilians in all accessible areas. It is hoped that relief agencies can soon begin operating in the south-east following the ECOMOG deployment in Greenville. At the present time, only 4 out of 13 counties remain inaccessible to the humanitarian community. Nevertheless, civilians and humanitarian workers continue to be harassed and abused by fighters. The civilian population in several areas has been denied freedom of movement, with people being pressed into forced labour or having their meagre food reserves, standing crops and personal belongings stolen by the fighters. In some instances, civilians have asked relief workers not to bring them food, fearing that it would only attract further harassment and suffering.

23. As for the humanitarian community, a United Nations/non-governmental organization humanitarian team was detained on 17 October by fighters in Grand Cape Mount county. The situation is, however, expected to improve following the agreement between the two wings of ULIMO to cease hostilities. On 28 October in Phebe, Bong county, relief supplies, vehicles and equipment belonging to the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) were seized and their staff harassed and detained. The shooting incident at the Executive

Mansion in Monrovia on 31 October, by heightening tensions among the factions, has had an adverse impact on humanitarian operations in the interior and led to threats that relief workers would be taken hostage if arrests were made in connection with the incident.

24. The situation of refugees remains essentially unchanged since my previous report. While the new timetable for the implementation of the Abuja Agreement foresees that repatriation of Liberian refugees will start on 22 November 1996, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) cannot reactivate its voluntary repatriation plan until there are clear indications that peace and security have been restored on a durable basis in the major areas of return.

25. Continued insecurity has also prevented UNHCR from assisting the majority of Sierra Leonean refugees living in rural areas of Liberia. UNHCR and its partners continue to extend protection and support to some 30,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in the Monrovia area. The large majority of this group are expected to seek assistance from UNHCR in returning home over the next 12 months.

Demobilization

26. In my report of 17 October, I presented a plan for demobilization, which had been developed by the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator (HACO) and UNOMIL, in consultation with ECOMOG, the LNTG and the factions. The plan includes a two-stage programme. During the first stage, which begins as soon as combatants are disarmed, they are registered, interviewed and receive some counselling and a medical examination. Thereafter the second stage begins and those who have no immediate means of livelihood will be absorbed into "bridging activities", that is, work and training projects that will help ensure they are productively engaged. This will assist in bridging the gap between disarmament and longer-term reintegration programmes - which constitute the third stage and which are currently being planned by donors, but are not likely to be operational for some months.

27. As indicated earlier, ECOMOG is taking the necessary steps to commence disarmament on 22 November. However, because of the unwillingness of the factions to implement fully the first steps of the Abuja Agreement, that is, cessation of all hostilities and disengagement of forces, the resources necessary to implement the demobilization programme are not in place, especially as regards the bridging activities. Nevertheless, HACO and UNOMIL will start demobilization on 22 November, in tandem, to the extent possible, with the commencement of disarmament. However, as a result of the limited means available, the only demobilization assistance that can be provided at this time will consist of registration and interviewing.

28. As a stop-gap measure, HACO is working with non-governmental organizations and donors in order to mobilize any capacity that currently exists on the ground to start bridging activities immediately. However, since the present capacity of the humanitarian community is severely limited, these temporary measures can at best meet only a small proportion of the expected demand for bridging activities. To sustain the demobilization programme, additional resources must be provided urgently, either through the UNOMIL budget, which will shortly be

submitted to the competent United Nations legislative bodies, or on a voluntary basis. The shortage of resources for bridging activities poses a potentially serious problem that would set back the peace process in the all too likely event that ex-combatants, in the absence of any alternative means of livelihood, turn to banditry or rejoin their factions. I therefore call on the international community to respond quickly to this urgent need and provide the resources necessary to enable critical bridging activities to commence as soon as possible.

## VI. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

29. By its resolution 51/3 of 17 October 1996, the General Assembly provided an appropriation in the amount of $8,176,000 gross, to be assessed at a rate of $1,168,000 per month, for the maintenance of UNOMIL for the period from 1 December 1996 to 30 June 1997, subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Mission.

30. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIL, as recommended in my report of 17 October (S/1996/858 and Add.1) and in paragraph 38 below, the additional requirements for the Mission will be sought from the General Assembly at its current session.

31. As at 31 October 1996, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIL special account since its inception amounted to $10.5 million. The total of outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at 31 October was $1,774 million.

32. Since my previous report, there have been no further voluntary contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia.

## VII. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

33. Despite the disturbing shooting incident at the Executive Mansion on 31 October 1996, there have been some relatively encouraging developments during the reporting period. ECOMOG has acted quickly and decisively to respond to events in Liberia. Steps have also been taken to address the complicated question of how to hold free and fair elections in Liberia. Another positive development has been the recent demonstration of support on the part of the international community to assist the peace process in Liberia. In addition, the ECOWAS countries have reiterated their determination to increase the force level of ECOMOG, subject to the provision of logistic and financial resources.

34. During a special conference on Liberia, held at the working level in New York on 22 October 1996, under the auspices of the United Nations, donor and ECOWAS countries considered the various aspects of peacekeeping and peace-building in Liberia, which required external support to underpin the overall peace process. Their consideration of these issues will continue at the ministerial level during a conference scheduled to be held at Brussels on 21 November, under the auspices of the Government of the Netherlands. I call on donors to ensure that their expressions of support are quickly turned into

concrete contributions, including the critical resources needed for the expansion of ECOMOG, the demobilization of combatants and the holding of elections.

35. During the 22 October meeting, concern was expressed that progress in the peace process had been adversely affected by the failure of the faction leaders adequately to inform their fighters about the revised timetable of the Abuja Agreement and the need to cease hostilities, disengage and prepare for disarmament and demobilization. To assist in this process, I have been exploring with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others the possibility of establishing a coordinated information programme in Liberia, based on radio broadcasts. A mission is being dispatched to Liberia to review this matter and develop recommendations on how to facilitate the wider dissemination of information.

36. While there have recently been some positive developments, the entrenched hostility and mistrust that have resulted from this protracted conflict continue to pose a threat to the peace process in Liberia. It is important that the faction and civilian leaders take steps to overcome these obstacles and work together constructively within the Council of State, so that the peace process can move forward. In this connection, I am encouraged by the recent rapprochement between the two wings of ULIMO. I remain concerned, however, about the continuing tensions between some of the other factions, in particular NPFL and LPC. I call upon the leaders of these factions to put aside their differences for the sake of peace in their country and to use the political process, instead of military means, to promote the interests of the people they claim to represent. I also call on them to facilitate the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance to those in need.

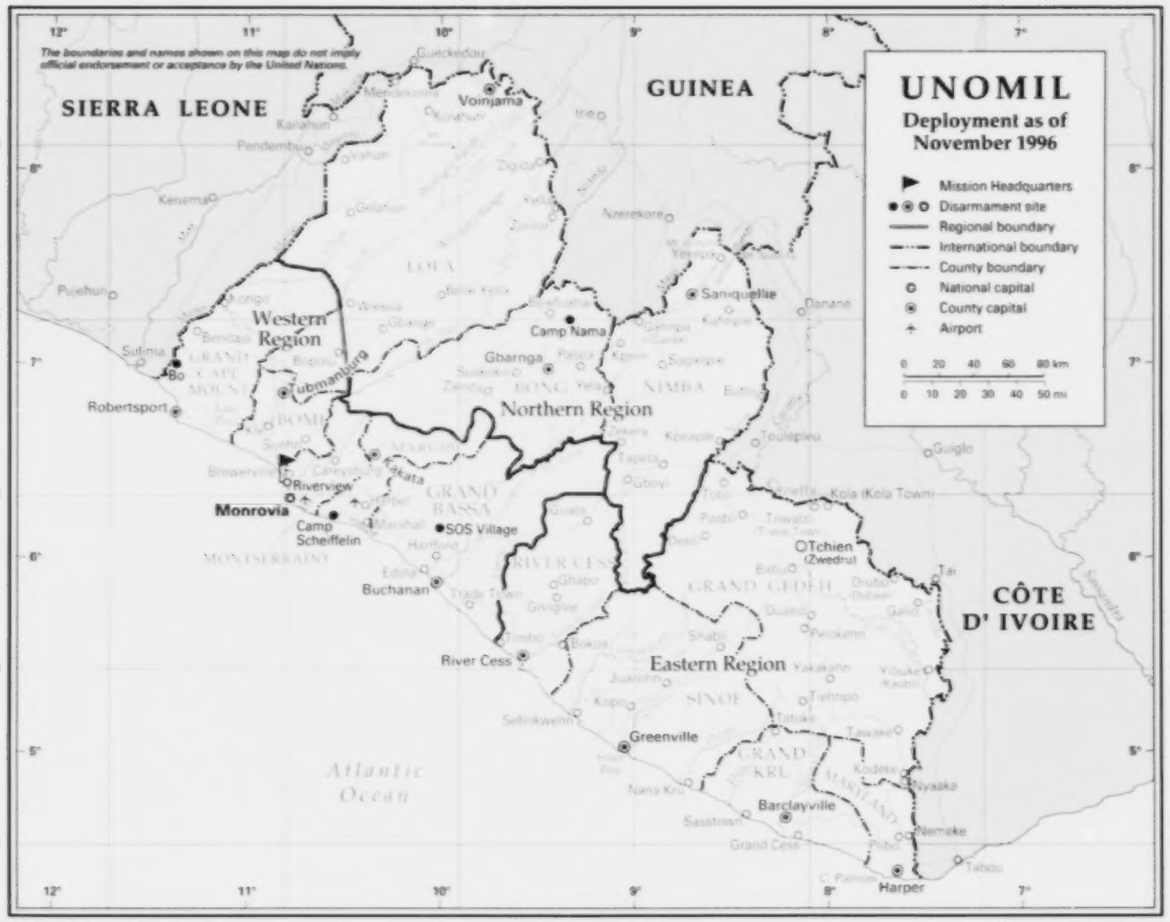
37. In my previous report to the Security Council, I provided recommendations, as requested in Security Council resolution 1071 (1996) of 30 August, on additional ways in which UNOMIL could support the peace process in Liberia. In a letter addressed to me on 8 November (PRST/1996/917), the President of the Security Council indicated that the Council welcomed these recommendations and requested me to make all appropriate arrangements necessary to carry them out, on the understanding that the deployment of the personnel and logistic resources necessary for this purpose would not be undertaken unless sufficient progress was made by the factions in the implementation of the Abuja Agreement. I shall accordingly submit a revised budget for UNOMIL to the competent legislative bodies in the near future.

38. In the meantime, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIL for a further period of four months, until 31 March 1997. During this period, I will continue to keep the situation in Liberia under close review and submit to the Security Council by 31 January 1997 a progress report containing, inter alia, recommendations on the role the United Nations could play in facilitating the holding of free and fair elections in that country.

## Annex

### Composition of the military component of UNOMIL as at 15 November 1996

| | |
|---|---|
| Bangladesh | 3 |
| China | 2 |
| Czech Republic | - |
| Egypt | 4 |
| India | 3 |
| Kenya | 5 |
| Malaysia | 2 |
| Nepal | - |
| Pakistan | 2 |
| Uruguay | 2 |
| Total | 23 |

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